

Profile of Hired Farmworkers, 1996 Annual Averages. By Jack L. Runyan.
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Abstract

Approximately 906,000 persons 15 years of age and older were employed as hired farmworkers each week in 1996. An additional 72,000 persons were hired as farmworkers each week as a secondary job. Hired farmworkers were more likely than all U.S. wage and salary workers to be male, Hispanic, younger, less educated, never married, and non-U.S. citizens. Hired farmworkers' real median earnings increased 4 percent between 1990 and 1996; real median weekly earnings for all wage and salary workers decreased about 4 percent. This report examines demographic and employment characteristics of hired farmworkers, using data from the 1996 Current Population Survey (CPS) earnings microdata file.

Keywords: Hired farmworkers, annual averages, demographic characteristics, hours worked, median weekly hours.

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Summary

Hired farmworkers continue to experience lower wages and higher unemployment than all wage and salary workers.

In 1996, the median weekly earnings of hired farmworkers was \$250, an increase of 25 percent (4 percent when adjusted for inflation) from 1990. During the same time period, median weekly earnings for the average U.S. wage and salary workers rose 15 percent (a 4-percent decrease in real terms).

Unemployment among hired farmworkers was about 11.5 percent in 1996, compared with 5.4 percent for all wage and salary workers. Unemployed farmworkers accounted for 2 percent of all U.S. unemployment that year.

Approximately 906,000 people 15 years and older were hired as farmworkers as their primary job each week in 1996. These workers were more likely than all wage and salary workers to be male, Hispanic, younger, less educated, never married, and non-U.S. citizens. A third reported less than a ninth-grade education, compared with less than 4 percent of all wage and salary workers.

About 72,000 people were employed as farmworkers for their secondary job each week.

More than 22 percent of the hired farm workforce was employed part-time (less than 35 hours a week) in 1996. These part-time workers were more likely than full-time laborers to be female, white, younger, and never married.

In 1996, 69 percent of hired farmworkers were employed in the West and the South. Only 7 percent worked in the Northeast. The Northeast and the Midwest reported a higher percentage of white and lower percentage of Hispanic laborers, the West had more Hispanic workers, and the South reported more black and “other” farmworkers than other regions.

Over a fourth (28 percent) of farmworkers were foreigners, most of whom were Hispanic. Thirty-six percent of hired farmworkers were Hispanic, meaning that as many as three-fourths of Hispanic farmworkers were non-U.S. citizens.

In the West, a greater percentage of farmworkers were employed in crop production than was the case in other regions; the Midwest reported a greater percentage in livestock production.

Median weekly earnings were lower in the Northeast and Midwest.

Data used for this analysis were taken from the 1996 Current Population Survey earnings microdata file.